

Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

Summary of Questions/Comment Cards from the October 25, 2018 Public Workshop

The questions and comments below were submitted by attendees at the October 25 public workshop. Due to time constraints, these questions were not able to be addressed at the meeting. Summary responses are provided below.

The following responses to the Questions/Comment Cards reflect the status of the planning process at the time of the October 25th Public Workshop.

If you need additional information about the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan effort, please visit the project website at www.howardcountymd.gov/ECMP or contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at 410-313-2350.

Questions Related to Flooding and Storm Water Management

Question/Comment: A great quantity of at risk vegetation is on private land. How will this be managed?

County Response: Debris management, including tree management, will be an important component of mitigation. Please [see slides 191-195](#) for master plan considerations presented on October 25. The County will explore options for at risk vegetation on private land, which may include right-of-entry agreements.

Question/Comment: When do they expect to dredge the Tiber? There is no less than 25 years of debris sitting in the Tiber and Hudson fork.

County Response: The County will work with the Corps of Engineers and MDE to see where dredging may be possible and to what extent.

Question: Please clear debris in the river behind the Washington flour factory for better water flow.

County Response: The County will need to work with our state and federal partners (DNR, Corps of Engineers, MDE) to see if the work is ultimately beneficial to Ellicott City. This area is under their jurisdiction.

Question/Comment: When will New Cut be addressed and how?

County Response: The Department of Public Works is working on slope repair along New Cut Road. The master plan concepts include debris management with recommendation to begin with New Cut Branch (see slide 195 in the [October 25 presentation](#)).

Question/Comment: What will be the impact of Taylor Place development on water coming down the hill – either New Cut or elsewhere? How much storm water management is needed to off-set 250 buildings as planned and all the impervious surface?

County Response: Council Bill 56-2018 placed a temporary moratorium on new development in the Tiber-Hudson Watershed. The moratorium bill requires the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) to study flood mitigation and regulatory options for both the Tiber-Hudson Watershed and the Plumtree Watershed in Valley Mede. For more information on topics to be studied, please see [CB56-2018](#) available on the Howard County Council webpage.

Question/Comment: What is the future of New Cut Road?

County Response: In March 2018, the master plan consultants emphasized New Cut Road's importance as a scenic corridor (see Slide 96 of the [March 22 public workshop presentation](#)). The consultants presented concepts for a recreational trail along the New Cut tributary (see Slide 165 in the [March 22 public workshop presentation](#)). The Department of Public Works is working on slope repair along New Cut Road and the master plan concepts include debris management with recommendation to begin with New Cut Branch (see slide 195 in the [October 25 presentation](#)).

Question/Comment: What will stop the flooding – flooding out all the “new” design?

County Response: Please refer to the [Ellicott City Hydrology and Hydraulic Study](#) for flood water levels associated with a hypothetical undeveloped scenario (termed “woods in good condition”). As presented at the May 31, 2017 master plan kickoff meeting, while development/impervious surfaces (and management of runoff) matters, it is not the whole issue. For an explanation of the H&H analysis associated with an undeveloped scenario, please view the [May 31, 2017 meeting video](#) (bookmarked to the undeveloped scenario presentation segment).

Question/Comment: What are you doing today to protect us immediately (like this weekend)?

County Response: Since the flooding that occurred on July 30, 2016, the County has undertaken multiple infrastructure projects and initiated design and engineering of other projects. Please refer to the [“Progress to Date” summary document](#).

Question/Comment: A number of newer developments have storm water features that either no longer work or have never worked. How will the county improve oversight of design construction of those features?

County Response: Citizens who are aware of storm water features that do not work should report the issue to the Department of Public Works. Please consider using the “SeeClickFix” web application to notify the County and monitor the response to your reported issue: https://en.seeclickfix.com/md_howard-county/report. All stormwater facilities are inspected on a triennial basis. Deficiencies are noted and repaired by the owner or County (usually within 30 to 60 days). Oversight during construction is performed by the Construction Inspection Division who approve the as-built conditions before they are taken into the system.

Question/Comment: Lower main will fill with sediment and rocks – is maintenance in the plan? We currently can't even pick up cigarette butts.

County Response: As the master plan consultants described at the October 25 workshop, maintenance will be important to maintain hydraulic function of the stream channel.

Question/Comment: The lower main riverfront images at eye level all look uphill. Looking downstream the largest feature will be giant open culverts, which will signal “You’re standing in a sewer.” Not appealing. What to do about this gaping problem?

County Response: Comment noted. The culverts below Maryland Avenue are illustrated conceptually in site plan view on Slide 111 of the [October 25 presentation](#). Additional design of the culverts will be developed at the 30% design development stage.

Question/Comment: After widening lower main, how can you ensure flooding water won’t be redirected at the B&O museum?

County Response: The B&O museum is a National Historic Landmark within the Ellicott City National Register Historic District. The Lower Main stream channel widening project requires a joint permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of the Environment. Howard County applied for the joint permit, which has triggered the Section 106 process.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act involves assessment of project effects on historic properties. When a project is found to have an adverse effect on historic properties, alternatives are explored to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those effects. For more information on the Section 106 process, please refer to the [Maryland Historical Trust’s guide](#).

The Section 106 process also involves consultation with the public, including the identification and solicitation of “consulting parties” – those with demonstrated interest in historic resources, economic interests, or legal interest. Please refer to the Maryland Historical Trust’s guide to [types of potential participants](#) in the Section 106 process.

Howard County has hired consultants to help with the Section 106 process. The consultants will initiate the project by submitting a Project Review Form to the Maryland Historical Trust. The consultants anticipate the process to take six months, at minimum, to complete.

Modelling indicates flood waters will not increase or decrease very much in the area around the B&O museum. The Corps of Engineers as well as MDE are reviewing the model findings.

Question/Comment: What is the Section 106 process – Time frame? Public input? Who is it given to?

County Response: Please refer to the response above to the question about the B&O museum.

Question/Comment: Any plans for water retention from Toll House Road, Papillion Dr., Rogers Ave., and Frederick Road at St. Johns to West End Service Company?

County Response: These roads are within the Hudson Branch sub-watershed. The [five-year flood mitigation plan](#) includes the following retention facilities in the Hudson Branch sub-watershed: Hudson 7 retention facility at US 29/Rt 40 interchange and the Quaker Mill retention facility along Rogers Avenue. The five-year plan also includes conveyance improvements in the sub-watershed: expansion of the 8600 Main Street Culvert and the “Hudson Bend” stream channel widening and daylighting.

Question/Comment: How can Tiber Park be planned without the mathematical calculations for the water or the location of Maryland Ave./culverts in drawings?

County Response: The [five-year plan](#) includes the addition of two culverts under Maryland Avenue, and the hydraulic modeling results illustrated on page 17 include the culverts. Modelling provided the water elevations during the worst storm. The stream channel will be systematically modelled again to fine tune the design.

Question/Comment: Are there plans for flood gates on CSX culverts (the two culverts proposed under Maryland Avenue) to deal with tailwater?

County Response: The culverts would need to remain open for hydraulic function but back flow valves could be a consideration.

Question/Comment: What are the plans to deal with water being kept on Main Street by design of Patapsco Bridge and Tiber wall at CSX Tiber outflow?

County Response: The two 10' diameter culverts under Maryland Avenue, described in the five-year plan, are proposed to divert flood water that would otherwise converge at the railroad bridge. All the projects in the five-year plan help mitigate the flood water elevations. The Patapsco Bridge and the Tiber walls at the bridge are fixed and taken into account within the model.

Question/Comment: Why is everyone else doing tunnels but they're impossible here?

County Response: Please refer to slides 22-25 in the [October 25 workshop presentation](#) and the [video recording of the tunnel bore presentation segment](#). At least one of the tunnels is technically feasible, but it does not represent a single solution that will fix all of the flood issues and it cannot realistically be designed and built within the five-year timeframe that was established. The function of the tunnels that were evaluated differ from many of those mentioned in meetings, which address low velocity combined sewer overflow storage. These are different functions than those evaluated for Ellicott City.

Question/Comment: Are those the best tunnel designs you could produce?

County Response: Please see the prior question and county response above regarding tunnels. They are the best tunnel locations.

Question/Comment: Breakaway bridge in lower main – has this been looked at?

County Response: The bridges over the Lower Main widened stream channel, as illustrated in the October 25 workshop presentation, will be further evaluated during the 30% design development phase. The design intent is to place the bridges at a height where they would not interfere with the hydraulic function of the stream channel.

Question/Comment: Stop or dam up the water before it reaches Ellicott City.

County Response: The [Hydrologic and Hydraulic Analysis](#) completed in the aftermath of the July 30, 2016 flood studied options for water retention in the Tiber-Hudson Watershed along with opportunities to make improvements to channels, culverts and storm drain systems to increase conveyance.

The “H&H” study resulted in the identification of 18 large infrastructure projects with a rough cost estimate of \$84 million; actual cost would be determined through subsequent detailed design/engineering evaluation. The retention projects in the study included both above and below ground storage and could collectively store 425 acre-feet of water. In comparison, the July 30, 2016 storm produced 796 acre-feet of water.

The “H&H” study above-ground retention facilities were proposed within the streams – to permitting agencies, such in-stream facilities are considered dams. When permitting agencies review in-stream dams, they evaluate the hazard risk associated with each facility. When more than one in-stream facility is proposed, the cumulative hazard risk is evaluated. Preliminary conversations with permitting agencies indicated that not all of the in-stream facilities would be possible due to potential risk hazards.

Question/Comment: Will Howard County cover the remaining property owners for flood insurance until all issues are remedied?

County Response: The County does not pay private flood insurance premiums. However, Howard County participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) program, a voluntary incentive program that recognizes floodplain management activities that exceed National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. Flood insurance policyholders may be eligible for premium discounts because of Howard County’s participation in the program. Please contact your insurance agent for more information on rates and coverage. FEMA has also published [a guide to the Community Rating System](#).

Howard County also offers a service where County staff can provide flood protection assistance to property owners and residents. The County staff can offer information concerning flood hazards and property protection, or make referrals concerning possible financing assistance. Learn more about [Howard County flood tips and resources](#) or contact the Bureau of Environmental Services at 410-313-6444.

Question/Comment: One of the plans in Hebden Bridge is to raise a wall along a road.

County Response: Please note none of the design precedents shown in the October 25 workshop presentation is meant to be a template to fully copy for Ellicott City. Rather, the examples were selected because each contains an element offering inspiration for the design. In Hebden Bridge, the terraced, wavy steps are the primary design inspiration.

With regards to a wall in Lower Main – at the July 11, 2017, master plan public workshop, the consultants recommended that open railings be used (rather than solid walls) to provide additional relief points for flood conveyance. Please refer to Slide 59 in the [July 11, 2017 presentation](#).

Question/Comment: There is a debris catcher system in place in canyons west of Almaty, Kazakhstan and east of the Earthen Dam above the Medeu. You might want to take a look at that.

County Response: Thank you for the suggestion. We will provide the comment to the consultant team for their consideration as they gather precedent images and examples of debris catchment systems for the draft master plan.

Questions Related to Parking and Streetscape Design

Question/Comment: Does the master plan effort address the possibility of relocating utilities such as electrical into an underground system, especially along Main Street?

County Response: The County explored relocating utilities underground following the 2016 flood. The cost to underground all the lines along Main Street, according to utility providers, was on the order of multiple tens of millions of dollars and therefore cost-prohibitive. However, the County will consider consolidation of lines as part of the more detailed design/development of a rebuilt streetscape along Main Street.

Question/Comment: Is the master plan envisioning commercial development of an historic district? Why three parking garages with commercial “wrappers”?

County Response: Garages are shown to recoup surface parking spaces that would be removed for flood mitigation improvements in Lots D and E (the “Hudson Bend” stream widening and daylighting project). Wrapping garages with active development offers the potential for businesses to relocate as spaces are removed. Wrapping garages also screens the parking garage structure and generates complimentary activity.

Question/Comment: Please do not put up contemporary facades/lighting on our historic main street.

County Response: Comment noted.

Question/Comment: The consultant said: “it is a hike up courthouse hill, but it’s doable.” Senior citizens are our fastest growing demographic. Many if not most seniors would not find it “doable.” The prevalence of overweight and out-of-shape younger residents makes it unlikely that you could convince them to walk up that hill either. How are you going to accommodate this need?

County Response: The draft master plan concepts include potential parking garages at multiple locations throughout town, not only at the courthouse site. On-street loading/unloading/drop-off zones are illustrated in the draft concepts for Lower Main. Street parking is shown in the draft concepts for Upper Main and Maryland Avenue. Surface parking lots would be retained in Lots B and C. A smaller parking lot could be developed in Lot E. The surface parking lot could be reconfigured in Lot F (or a multi-level garage could be an alternative option). A temporary shuttle was also suggested as an opportunity to explore. Please refer to Slide 68 in the [October 25 workshop presentation](#).

Question/Comment: Is there a possibility for a parking garage behind Ellicott Mills brewery?

County Response: The surface parking lot behind Ellicott Mills brewery, known as Lot E, is the location of proposed future widening of the stream channel for flood mitigation (also known as the “Hudson Bend” project in the draft master plan concepts). Once the widened stream channel is in place, remaining space in Lot E is not large enough to accommodate a parking garage. For an overview of the “Hudson Bend” concept and associated illustrations, please refer to Slides 163-168 in the [October 25 workshop presentation](#).

Question/Comment: What high rise buildings are envisioned (over two stories)?

County Response: The definition of a high-rise building includes multiple floors. Some codes define high-rise as a building with an occupied floor located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access. Buildings proposed for downtown Ellicott City are considered low-rise. The master plan concepts include multi-level parking garages wrapped with active uses on parking Lot D and the Courthouse parking lot. Potential garages in Lots A and F were also illustrated. Please note these garages are illustrative concepts and not actual development proposals. Garages are shown to recoup surface parking spaces that would be removed for flood mitigation improvements in Lots D and E (the “Hudson Bend” stream widening and daylighting project).

Question/Comment: Why do you show ideas from around the world but not the facades in Louisville?

County Response: Please refer to Slide 40 of the [September 12 master plan presentation](#), which illustrates the hydraulic modeling result of retaining only building facades along Lower Main. As described in the five-year plan, although this option would preserve the facades, the result showed the water depth on lower Main Street did not decrease significantly.

Please also note there will be a building-by-building structural evaluation through the Section 106 process to determine materials that may be suitable for salvage and reuse, including facades.

Question/Comment: The expanded/reinvisioned sidewalk concepts are great for improving pedestrian travel, but how will the new structures interact with cyclists? Can biking lanes be added to the concept and potentially, further from Ellicott City, i.e. along Frederick Road to Miller library.

County Response: With limited space along Main Street (from the Patapsco to Rogers Avenue), the [Howard County bicycle master plan](#) calls for “sharrows” or “shared-lane markings” rather than bike lanes. The existing sidewalks are narrow and constrained by utility poles. Widened sidewalks for an improved pedestrian experience is an important component in a walkable Main Street commercial district and West End neighborhood. For the stretch of Main Street from the Patapsco River Bridge to Ellicott Mills Drive, sharrows are further required by the Howard County Code ([see Section 21.403A](#)).

Beyond Rogers Avenue, the Howard County bicycle master plan calls for bike lanes or paved and striped shoulder along Frederick Road to Miller library.

Question/Comment: Could there be sidewalks on both sides of Ellicott Mills please?

County Response: The master plan concepts include sidewalks on both sides of Ellicott Mills – please refer to Slide 168 of the [October 25 workshop presentation](#).

Questions Related to Plan Approval and Funding

Question/Comment: Where in the five-year budget is all of this budgeted?

County Response: On October 1, 2018, the Howard County Council approved funding Phase 1 of the five-year plan. Additional funding is being pursued at the state and federal levels. Subsequent phases will be subject to future fiscal year capital budget processes.

Question/Comment: Where is the grant money?

County Response: The Community Foundation of Howard County is the point of contact for grant funding and issued a press release on November 5, 2018. Please visit <https://cfhoco.org/about-cfhoco/news/>. For information on resources available for flood recovery, please visit www.ECfloodrecovery.org.

Question/Comment: What about CSX – how will the master plan be okayed by CSX?

County Response: The county will coordinate with CSX on the twin culverts under Maryland Avenue proposed as part of the implementation of the five-year flood mitigation plan. The county will engage in discussions with CSX when the time is appropriate.

Question/Comment: Thank you for the plan; details for the future of Ellicott City. We are grateful for this and hopeful for the future of Ellicott City! We love the vision, can't wait for the implementation.

County Response: Comment noted.